

# EAE 3020: Ethics in Videogames

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**Office:** 221, Building 72 (Entertainment Arts & Engineering)

**Office Hours:** Email for appointment

**Class Time:** Tuesdays/Thursday 10:45-12:05 pm



## Course Description

How do videogames impact society? What special responsibilities do we have as players and consumers and how can we use ethical theories in our daily practice? In this class we will learn and discuss various ethical theories and examine the role games can play in helping us reason about ethical problems. Students will also play and analyze games and discuss their embedded values and politics.

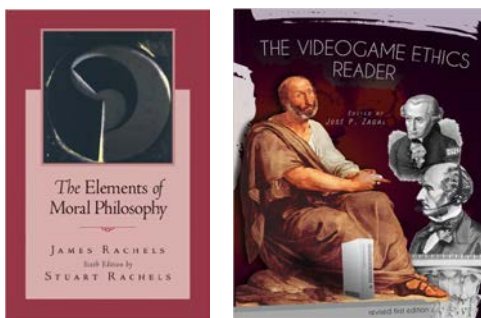
During this class we will alternate between lectures and discussions. Minimum expectations include reading the assigned material before class, playing the assigned videogames, watching the assigned movies, and participating in class discussions.

## Texts

### Required:

1. *The Videogames Ethics Reader* by Jose Zagal (Ed), Cognella: San Diego<sup>1</sup>  
(<https://titles.cognella.com/the-videogame-ethics-reader-9781609276355.html>)
2. *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* (Paperback, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition<sup>2</sup>) by James Rachels and Stuart Rachels, McGraw Hill

Please note that additional required readings are listed in the class schedule. The additional readings will be available for download from the course website (Canvas).



<sup>1</sup> Publisher recommendation for purchase the textbook: (1) Log on to <https://students.universityreaders.com/store/>, (2) Create an account or log in if you have an existing account. (3) Follow instructions through the rest of the ordering process. (4) After purchasing you can access a partial e-book by logging into your account and clicking My Digital Materials. If you experience any difficulties, email [orders@cognella.com](mailto:orders@cognella.com) or call 800.200.3908 ext. 503.

<sup>2</sup> The 6<sup>th</sup> edition is an older edition that's available **much, MUCH** more cheaply than the current edition. For the purposes of this course, the 6<sup>th</sup> and newer editions are all useful. You don't have to buy the newest edition unless you really, really want to.

## Grading

- 39%: Three (3) One-Page Ethical Analysis Papers
  - *Part 1: GameLog (12%)*
  - *Part 2: Draft (9%)*
  - *Part 3: Final (18%)*
- 20%: Midterm
- 10%: Class participation
- 10%: Attendance
- 21%: Exam

A = 100-93, A- = 92-90, B+ = 89-88, B = 87-83, B- = 82-80, C+ = 79-78, C = 77-73, C- = 72-70, D+ = 69-68, D = 67-63, D- = 62-60, F = 59-0. A indicates excellence, B indicates good work, C indicates satisfactory work, D work is unsatisfactory in some respect, F is substantially unsatisfactory work.

**Late assignments** – Late assignments will be penalized with a grade reduction for each day of tardiness. Assignments turned in more than four (4) days late will not be graded and will receive a score of zero (0). Assignments are due at the start of class unless otherwise indicated.

## Assignments

The following are brief descriptions of the assignments. Detailed instructions will be made available during the semester and/or discussed in class.

### Attendance

You can miss up to three (3) class sessions with no penalty. After that, you lose 10 pts from your attendance grade for each class you miss. Attendance means **arriving and leaving on time!**

### Participation

Class participation is important in order to be successful in this class. I expect you to have done the required readings **before** class and be prepared to explain and discuss them. **Asking questions and participating in class discussions and activities is an important part of the participation grade.** In this class there is no such thing as a stupid or inappropriate question. Attendance is **not** synonymous with participation!

### One Page Analysis Papers

This assignment consists of three parts (each with a different due date, see schedule for details on when each part is due):

#### Part 1: GameLog of Chosen Game

For this part, you will keep a GameLog, or journal, of your gameplaying experience with a game you'll choose from the list below. In order to do this assignment, you will need to create an account on the site <http://www.GameLog.cl>. This assignment requires that you write 3 different GameLog entries, each posted on a **different** day. Each entry should describe the experience you had while playing the game (for at least 30 minutes each session) and reflect on that experience in

the context of the topics discussed in class. You will probably have to play the game more often and for longer, 30 minutes for each of three play sessions is a bare minimum.

### Part 2: OPA Draft

Write a One Page Analysis (OPA) paper where you analyze a moral question or issue depicted, represented, or related in some way to the game you played for the previous part of this assignment (in other words, write about the same game you wrote your GameLog on). This paper must be single spaced, use a 12 point font, and should not exceed one standard printed page. Submitted this online using the course online system. There are sample papers available for reference.

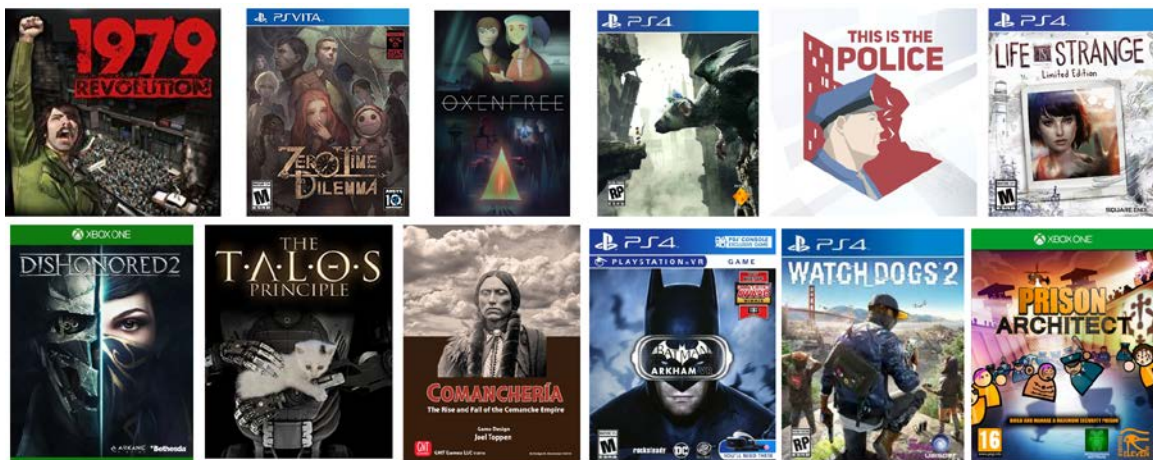
### Part 3: OPA Final

Revise and improve your draft based on the feedback you received on your draft. If your draft was “perfect” (no comments or improvements necessary), you don’t need to submit anything and you’ll get full credit!

### Approved Games for OPA Assignment

- 1979 Revolution
- Zero Escape: Zero Time Dilemma
- Oxenfree
- The Last Guardian
- This is the Police
- Life is Strange
- Dishonored 2
- The Talos Principle
- Comancheria (boardgame)
- Batman Arkham VR
- Watchdogs 2
- Prison Architect

Most of the above games are available for checkout from the Marriott library. The library also has an area with game consoles set up (including a PSVR) for you to play in the library if needed.



## Class Schedule

Aug 22	<b>Introduction</b>	Aug 24	<b>Morality</b> Read: Preface (Ethics Reader) Rachels (Ch. 1 – What is Morality?)
Aug 29	<b>Power of Media</b> Read: Zagal (Ch. 4, Ethics Reader, pg 67-82)	Aug 31	<b>NO CLASS</b>  <b>Due:</b> OPA #1, Part 1 (GameLog)
Sep 5 	<b>Playing Columbine (screening)</b>	Sep 7	<b>Violence</b> Read: Ferguson (Ethics Reader) <b>Due:</b> OPA #1, Part 2 (Draft)
Sep 12	<b>Ethical Frameworks in Games</b> Read: Sicart (Ethics Reader) Belman et al. (Ethics Reader)	Sep 14	<b>Moral Frameworks</b>
Sep 19	<b>Relativism</b> Read: Rachels (Ch. 2,3 – Cultural Relativism and Subjectivism)	Sep 21	<b>Representation</b> Read: Shaw (Ethics Reader) <b>Due:</b> OPA #1, Part 3 (Final)
Sep 26	<b>Utilitarianism</b> Read: Rachels (Ch. 7,8 – Utilitarian Approach, Debate over Utilitarianism)	Sep 28	<b>Kantianism</b> Read: Rauch (Ethics Reader) Rachels (Ch. 9,10 – Absolute Moral Rules, Kant and Respect for Persons) <b>Due:</b> OPA #2, Part 1 (GameLog)
Oct 3	<b>Censorship and Moral Panics</b> Read: Calvert & Richards (Ethics Reader) ESRB Rating system ( <a href="http://www.esrb.org">http://www.esrb.org</a> )	Oct 5	<b>Social Contract Theory</b> Read: Rachels (Ch. 6 – Idea of a Social Contract) <b>Due:</b> OPA #2, Part 2 (Draft)
Oct 10	<b>NO CLASS – FALL BREAK</b>	Oct 12	<b>NO CLASS – FALL BREAK</b>
Oct 17	<b>Ethical Dilemmas</b>	Oct 19	<b>MID TERM (in-class)</b>
Oct 24	<b>Virtue Ethics</b> Read: Rachels (Ch 12 – Ethics of Virtue)	Oct 26	<b>Cheating</b> Read: Consalvo (Ethics Reader)
Oct 31	<b>Moral Psychology</b> Read: Saxe (online)	Nov 2	<b>Ethical Player</b> Read: Gee (Ethics Reader) Consalvo, Busch & Jong (online) <b>Due:</b> OPA #2, Part 3 (Final)
Nov 7	<b>Feminism and Ethics of Care</b> Read: Rachels (Ch. 11 Feminism & ethics of care)	Nov 9 	<b>GTFO (screening)</b>  <b>Due:</b> OPA #3, Part 1 (GameLog)
Nov 14	<b>Intellectual Property</b> Read: Quinn (Ch.4, read until pg. 191, online)	Nov 16	<b>Prosumers and User-Generated Content</b> Read: O'Donnell (Ethics Reader) Newman (Ethics Reader) <b>Due:</b> OPA #3, Part 2 (Draft)
Nov 21	<b>NO CLASS</b>	Nov 23	<b>NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING</b>
Nov 28	<b>Going Online</b> Read: Dibbell (Ethics Reader)	Nov 30	<b>Professional Ethics</b> Read: Dyer-Witherford and de Peuter (Ethics Reader)
Dec 5	<b>Dark Patterns</b> Read: Zagal, Bjork, and Lewis (online)	Dec 7	<b>Author Abuse</b> Read: Wilson & Sicart (Ethics Reader) <b>Due:</b> OPA #3, Part 3 (Final)
Dec 11	<b>Exam: 10:30am-12:30pm</b>		

## **Other Relevant Information**

### ADA Statement

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Union Building, (810) 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations.

### Faculty and Student Responsibilities

All students are expected to maintain professional behavior in the classroom setting, according to the Student Code, spelled out in the Student Handbook. Students have specific rights in the classroom as detailed in Article III of the Code. The Code also specifies proscribed conduct (Article XI) that involves cheating on tests, plagiarism, and/or collusion, as well as fraud, theft, etc. Students should read the Code carefully and know they are responsible for the content. According to Faculty Rules and Regulations, it is the faculty responsibility to enforce responsible classroom behaviors, beginning with verbal warnings and progressing to dismissal from class and a failing grade. Students have the right to appeal such action to the Student Behavior Committee.

### Non-Contract Note

Note: The syllabus is not a binding legal contract. The instructor may modify it when the student is given reasonable notice of the modification.

### Plagiarism Software Policy

Your professor may elect to use a plagiarism detection service in this course, in which case you will be required to submit your paper to such a service as part of your assignment.

### Copyright Notice

By participating in this course, students allow the instructor and the university to use materials submitted to the class for educational use, including but not limited to presentations and research conducted by the instructor. Copyright is retained by the student.

### Accommodation Policy

The instructor shall offer no accommodation based on class content. Students must learn to negotiate personal beliefs with objectionable content in a professional manner. Should students require assistance in this they may solicit informal advice from the instructor, however no formal exceptions nor accommodations shall be provided for content.



## Statement

I have read and understand the course syllabus. I am also aware that the course syllabus may change during the quarter. The class instructor will make sure that the online version is up to date and will announce changes during class in a timely manner. It is my responsibility to stay abreast of any changes that may occur.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

If there is anything you would like me, as your instructor, to know about you for this semester, please write it down here or send me an email. This includes any special needs or requirements you may have.

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